A Family Affair: Tulane’s Executive MBA Brings Parents and Children Together

September 25, 2025



Dr. Rajat Walia (EMBA '27), left, with his son, Tejus Walia (SLA '28). Dr. Walia is enrolled in Freeman’s Executive MBA program while his son pursues his undergraduate degree in Tulane’s School of Liberal Arts.

When Dr. Rajat Walia accompanied his son on a campus tour of Tulane University, he never expected to leave with dreams of his own. As they walked beneath the sprawling oak trees and admired the historic architecture, something unexpected stirred within him — a desire to return not just as a proud parent but as a student himself.

"I had this little dream in the back of my mind — getting my MBA at the same university as one of my kids," recalls Dr. Walia, division chief of pulmonary medicine at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix. "Pursuing my MBA at Freeman, with its great reputation, felt like the perfect way to deepen my

connection with my son."

Today, Dr. Walia is part of Tulane's Executive MBA program, joining a select cohort of accomplished professionals who gather on alternating weekends to pursue advanced business education. His Tulane experience is enriched by a unique dimension — the shared journey with his son, creating moments of connection that transcend the traditional parent-child relationship.

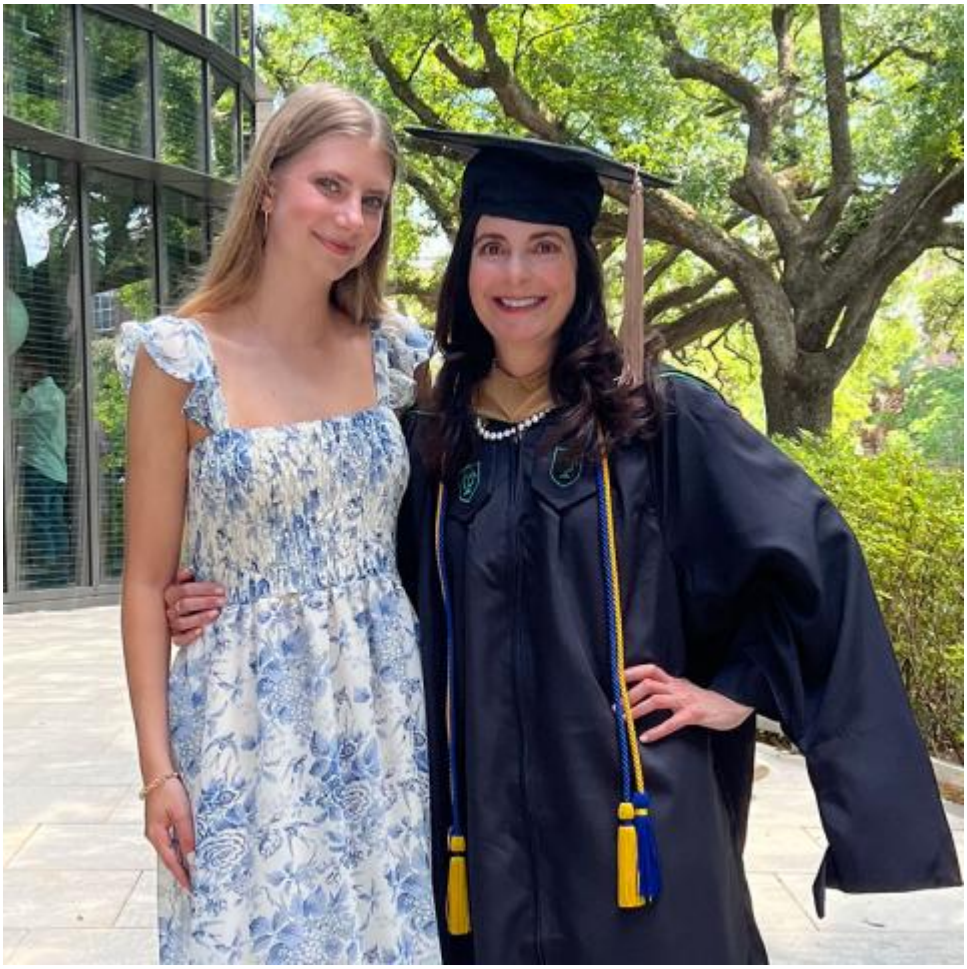
A Growing Tradition

Dr. Walia's story represents an emerging trend within Tulane's EMBA program, with a growing number of cohorts featuring a current Tulane parent. These parent-students bring unique perspectives to classroom discussions, often drawing parallels between their executive-level challenges and the undergraduate experiences their children share with them.

Melanie Mercier (EMBA '23) regularly traveled from San Francisco to New Orleans to pursue her Executive MBA while her daughter Caroline (BSM '25) completed her undergraduate studies. The cross-country journey became more than an educational pursuit — it transformed into a powerful bonding experience.

"Sharing the experience of being a Tulane EMBA student alongside my daughter as she pursued her undergraduate degree was a once-in-a-lifetime gift," Melanie reflects. "The time and dedication invested in the EMBA program not only gave me a profound appreciation for the value and prestige of Tulane University's academic curriculum but also led me to pay it forward by launching a new business to help companies succeed while making a positive impact."

For Melanie, the parallel educational journeys created unexpected moments of connection. "Embracing this journey as both parent and student was mutually inspiring and motivating, pushing this mother-daughter duo to excel, achieve great rewards and create a lasting legacy in true Green Wave spirit."



Melanie Mercier (EMBA '23), right, with her daughter Caroline (BSM '25) at Melanie's Executive MBA graduation.

A Program Designed for Transformation

What makes Tulane’s EMBA program particularly appealing to current Tulane parents is its thoughtful design that balances rigorous academics with practical flexibility. The program’s lock-step curriculum allows busy professionals to complete their degree in just 17 months, with classes meeting on alternating weekends, creating natural opportunities for parent-students to coordinate visits with their undergraduate children.

The program’s global focus includes an international seminar that immerses students in worldwide business practices, while courses in technology management, AI and data analytics prepare graduates for leadership in an increasingly complex business landscape. Throughout the program, students benefit from a collaborative learning environment with diverse professionals who become trusted colleagues and

friends.

Upon graduation, EMBA students join Tulane’s powerful network of 167,000 alumni worldwide, a network their children will eventually join as well, creating a multi-generational family legacy connected to the university.

More Than a Degree

For parents like Dr. Walia and Melanie Mercier, the Tulane EMBA represents more than just a prestigious credential — it’s a bridge that connects generations through shared experience.

The program creates unexpected dimensions to the relationship between parent-students and their undergraduate children, dimensions built on mutual respect, shared challenges and common achievement. Many find that pursuing an EMBA while their child attends a Tulane undergraduate program provides unique opportunities for connection and mutual growth.

Join Us for Wave Weekend

If you’re a Tulane parent considering how to advance your career while deepening your connection to your child's educational experience, we invite you to join us during Wave Weekend for our special event:

Back to School at the Stewart Center: Executive, Online & Professional MBA Pathways
Friday, November 14, 2025
3:15 PM - 4:30 PM
Goldring/Woldenberg Business Complex
7 McAlister Dr
New Orleans, Louisiana

During this informative session, you’ll hear from accomplished Freeman School alumni who successfully earned their MBAs while maintaining full-time careers. Our panel will share their journey back to the classroom and how their Freeman experience accelerated their professional growth. You'll also connect with representatives from the Stewart Center for Professional and Executive Education, which supports adult learners with MBA pathways designed to be flexible while

delivering world-class education.

Register for Wave Weekend